

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (e). The Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh had passed a resolution on 8 December, 1995 recommending to the Government of India to withdraw the excise concession given to mini-cigarettes to protect the livelihood of bidi workers.

Excise duty on bidis continues to be chargeable at the rate of Rs. 5 per thousand since 1993-94 and figures of Excise duty realised from bidis since 1993-94 do not show any fall in revenue. Thus, taking revenue collection as a proxy of production of bidis, it would be seen that there has been no short fall in production of bidis in the last two years.

At present, there is no proposal under the consideration of the Government to ban production and sale of cigarettes of length not exceeding 60 mm. However, in the Budget for 1996-97 and with effect from 23.7.1996, excise duty on non-filter cigarettes of length not exceeding 60mm, known as mini-cigarettes, has been increased from Rs.60 to Rs.75 per thousand cigarettes.

Voting Right to Indians Living Abroad

2645. PROF. P.J. KURIEN :

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA :

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) the approximate number of Indians living in foreign countries who do not have the Voting Rights because they are not ordinarily resident of India;

(b) whether there was any demand for amending the Representation of People Act, 1950 to provide them the Voting Right; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) According to records available with Ministry of External Affairs, about 14 million people of Indian origin are living abroad. A person who is not ordinarily resident in any place in India is not entitled to be registered as voter unless he belongs to certain categories of persons who are deemed to be ordinarily resident of a place by virtue of the provisions of section 20 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Owing to practical and administrative difficulties, it has not yet been possible to grant voting rights to Indians living abroad.

[Translation]

Signing of MOU

2646. SHRI LALIT ORAON : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that the Chief Minister of Bihar has signed 29 Memorandum of Understanding with Non-Resident Indians residing abroad for setting up industries in Bihar but these MoU have not been implemented so far; and

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b). The information regarding MOUs signed by the Government of Bihar with NRIs are not available with the Central Government.

[English]

Meeting of Export Promotion Council

2647. SHRI ANCHAL DAS : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Export Promotion Council meeting was held on July 17, 1996;

(b) if so, the details of issues discussed in the meeting and the number of delegates participated therein;

(c) the growth rate in exports likely to be increased in coming months; and

(d) the contribution of India in the World Trade in 1995-96 and as on date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The meeting reviewed the export performance by the various Export Promotion Councils/Commodity Boards and also discussed the need for increasing export performance. Representatives from most of the Export Promotion Councils/Commodity Boards besides senior officials from different Government Departments/Ministries participated.

(c) Export promotion is a continuous exercise. It is expected that the momentum of increase in exports would be sustained in the coming months.

(d) Increased exports would improve India's share in world trade and its rank as exporter. According to latest available WTO statistics, India's share and ranking as exporter and importer in world merchandise trade